

Lower Neuse Bird Club

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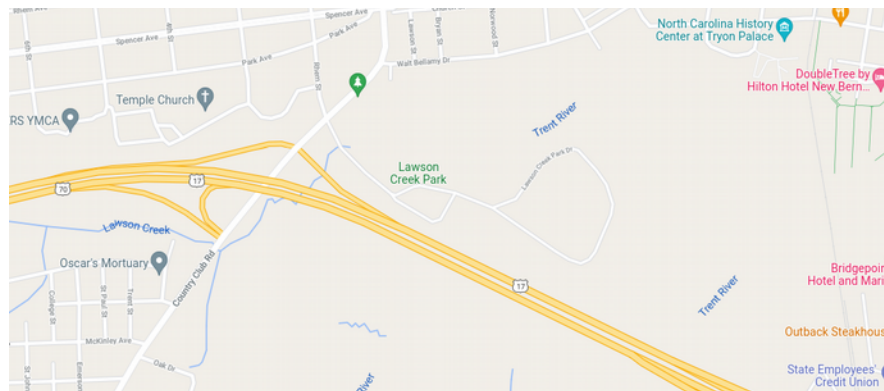
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Jan. 8th Bird Walk – Lawson Creek Park/New Bern

The LNBC Bird Walk for January is on Saturday, Jan. 8th, and we will hope to find many species that overwinter, beginning at Lawson Creek Park on the outskirts of downtown New Bern. We will likely spend a couple of hours here, and then continue to more local hotspots, depending on what birds are being seen locally. Meet up at **7:30 AM** at the parking area just inside the main entrance to Lawson Creek Park. Park right by the airplane (the display that can be seen from the US-70 overpass).

[Lawson Creek Park – Click for directions](#)



Correction: Last month's issue featured a Black-throated Green Warbler.

Here is:

Blackburnian Warbler
Jackson Park, Henderson
County

Oct. 11, 2021

©Michael Cheves

Monthly Meeting Postponed

Due to multiple factors including CDC recommendations for the *Omicron* variant of COVID-19, the decision has been made to cancel the Monthly Meeting for January. The February Meeting remains scheduled as usual. Any members who need to pay annual dues for the 2021-2022 Program Year can mail a payment to our treasurer at the following address:

Christine Stoughton Root
458 Country Club Drive West
Arapahoe, NC 28510

Dues are \$15 per person. Checks should be made out to **Lower Neuse Bird Club**. Please check your emails for updates on the meeting schedule.

Lower Neuse Bird Club

NC Wildlife Resources – Education Calendar

Contributed by Alicia Davis, Alligator Biologist/NC Wildlife Resources Commission

The [Pechmann Fishing Center](#) in Fayetteville released its January schedule, which includes both in-person and virtual classes. The education center is managed by NC Wildlife Resources Commission. Each course is led by Wildlife Commission staff or trained volunteers. Most events are free, and a North Carolina fishing license is not required. January events include:

- Jan. 4th – Entomology for Anglers (Virtual), 6:30-8:30 PM**
- Jan. 6th – Soft Plastics Lure Making Class, 6:30-8:30 PM**
- Jan. 7th – Fly-Fishing Basics: Understanding & Selecting Fly-Fishing Equipment (Virtual), 6:30-8:30 PM**
- Jan. 8th – Basic Fly-Fishing Workshop, 9:00 AM-3:00 PM (Ages 13+)**
- Jan. 11th – Rod Building Primer (Virtual), 6:30-8:30 PM**
- Jan. 15th – Basic Rod Building Workshop, 8:00 AM-5 PM (Ages 16+)**
- Jan. 19th – Fly-tying Forum (Virtual), 6:30-8:00 PM (Ages 10+)**
- Jan. 21st – Fly-Fishing Basics: Understanding & Selecting Fly-Fishing Equipment (Virtual), 6:30-8:30 PM**
- Jan. 22nd – Basic Fly-Fishing Workshop, 9:00 AM-3:00 PM (Ages 13+)**
- Jan. 26th – The Fish of a Thousand Casts – Musky Fishing Seminar (Virtual), 6:30-8:00 PM**

Registration for all workshops and classes is available online at: ncwildlife.org/learning/education-centers/pechmann
Or by calling **(910)-868-5003**



Birding Calendar
Dec 2021-Jan. 2022

*Jan. 8th: First Saturday Bird Walk (Lawson Creek Park/New Bern Area)
Meet at 7:30 AM at first parking lot near entrance*

Feb. 5th: Lake Mattamuskeet NWR, Lake Phelps, Pungo Lake (all day trip)

March 5th: Ft. Macon State Park

April 13th: Spring Creek or TBD

April 30th: Goose Creek SP (Friday walk)

May 7th: Bear Grass VOA (Henslow's Sparrow site)

May 11th (mid-week): Camp Brinson (Black-throated Green Warbler site)

May 17th-19th: Warbler Road, Virginia (Overnight)

June 5th: North River Wetlands Preserve (Dickcissel site)

Bird Report – December 2021

by Michael Cheves

The month of December can often be one of the most memorable months of the year. Sure, most of the colorful warblers have migrated to Central & South America, birdsong has been mostly replaced by cryptic chirps, tweets, and various other calls. Still, it is the time for Christmas Bird Counts, waterfowl, and with more people having more time to bird, more rare migrating birds are often discovered during December. The Lower Neuse Bird Club went out for the usual First Saturday Bird Walk on December 4th, meeting at 7:30 AM at the Oriental Recreation Park. Our guides, Pamlico County residents Sheryl McNair and Diane Midness, arranged carpools for the other 14 birders who were awake, alert, and avian-minded. The plan was to caravan from the Recreation Park to several birding sites in the area, some of which not have enough space for a lot of vehicles.

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Bird Report – December 2021

by Michael Cheves, continued from Page #2

The first birding site Sheryl & Diane took us to was Bent Tree Rd., a short distance Northeast of the Recreation Park. The first two miles of Bent Tree Rd. bisect approximately 22 acres of land officially labeled as “Bent Tree Landing Lot 25”. This land is owned by Sheryl and her husband John, which they purchased to protect from being developed. Way to go! The woods were full of birds when we arrived. Woodpeckers were tapping in “Morse Code” on the tree trunks, warblers were foraging in the canopy, and sparrows were doing the same on the ground. Bird song and call notes emanated from the woods on either side of the road, from the hushed *tseets* of the kinglets in the canopy to the “*O-Canada-Canada*” of the White-throated Sparrow, we immediately go to work, sorting out which song or call is coming from which direction. A breakout candidate for “Bird of the Day” was soon seen by a few in our group, as an elusive Brown Creeper worked its way up a tree trunk. The Brown Creeper is one of those birds that has no problems quickly disappearing into its surroundings!

After our guided tour of Bent Tree, we headed east out to River Dunes. This is usually one of the better birding sites near Oriental during the winter season. Hidden behind the fire station on Orchard Creek Road (State Rt. 1317) is a large retention pond (big enough to have formerly been a borrow pit). The pond is on a smaller quadrant of land on the southwest end of a 927-acre parcel owned by River Dunes Land Holdings, LLC. There are no gates, posted signs, or purple paint anywhere, and an easy hike of less than one quarter-mile leads to a vantage point with ample space to set up scopes and survey the water. The River Dunes pond has hosted a large variety of waterfowl during previous club trips, and sometimes flocks of Greater Yellowlegs can be seen (and heard!). Only a few days prior to this trip, Sheryl had photographed a Common Goldeneye here, but this small diving duck was not present for the group this morning. There are no guarantees when it comes to chasing rare species. Here we got some good looks at a few dozen ducks that were swimming on the water. Both male and female Bufflehead and Hooded Merganser made up the majority of the duck population for this day, as well as two Wood Ducks. The male Hooded Merganser commanded our attention every time it flashed its namesake bright white “hood”. A Greater Yellowlegs was walking along the far north edge of the pond, moving in and out of view as we aimed our scopes in that direction. As we prepared to leave, two North American River Otters emerged from the woods north of the pond, making their way towards the water. Somewhat clumsy on land, but expert swimmers in the water! A welcome sight of this endemic semiaquatic mammal.



Top: Brown Creeper
Bent Tree Rd.
Oriental, NC

Dec. 4, 2021
©Michael Cheves



Top: Bufflehead (Male)
River Dunes

Dec. 4, 2021
©Mike Creedon

Continued on Page #4



Left: North American River
Otters
River Dunes
©Michael Cheves

Lower Neuse Bird Club

Bird Report – December 2021

by Michael Cheves, continued from Page #3



*Looking Back at Us:
Royal Tern
Styrontown Beach Rd.,
Oriental*

*Dec. 4th, 2021
©Michael Cheves*

We left River Dunes after spending perhaps a little bit less time than we normally would have at the pond, and reversed course, heading back towards Oriental. We soon were back where we started, at the Oriental Recreation Park. Shortly after we arrived, a low-flying American Kestrel piqued our interest for a few minutes. Sheryl & Diane led us behind the park to the water treatment ponds, where they have secured permission for LNBC birders to go in past the gate (which is normally locked) and look for ducks on the ponds. We crossed the hedges on the Southeast side of the park, scopes and cameras in tow. At the ponds, we saw a lot of water, but unfortunately, no ducks. Another unusual result for a site that normally hosts a great variety of duck species. Today is just not the day for ducks! Upon our arrival at the ponds, four Wilson's Snipe flushed up from the shallow waters at the edge of the pond, a prized addition to this morning's trip list. The lack of waterfowl allowed us more time to study the hedge rows at the gate, where a good number of songbirds were busily foraging. Most of them were Yellow-rumped, but an Orange-crowned Warbler briefly poked its head out of the leafy vegetation as it was foraging, giving us a second new bird for our trip list before we left.

For the final portion of our Bird Walk, we explored the fields and waterfront on the east side of Oriental. The area is a sharp contrast between rural and residential, as we left the crop fields and immediately found ourselves in a subdivision where beautiful homes are being built on the Neuse River waterfront. We made one stop along Raccoon Run, where we watched in amazement as a Northern Harrier flushed several Eastern Meadowlarks out of the tall grasses. Another stop in this area presented us with another American Kestrel, this one sitting still on a perch in a vacant lot. We ended our morning's tour of Oriental at a waterfront lot at the dead end of Styrontown Beach Road (State Rt. 1310), a great vantage point for scoping out the Neuse River. We enjoyed close views of hundreds of gulls (Laughing and Ring-billed) and a few Royal Terns and Brown Pelicans, all of which were roosting in close quarters on the remains of a storm-damaged pier. Some of the Royal Terns were putting on a show for us, preening and stretching as our camera shutters snapped in unison. Despite low waterfowl numbers, we still tallied a total of 56 species for the morning and had a lot of great sightings. Heartfelt gratitude to Sheryl & Diane for leading this tour of Oriental!

After the First Saturday Bird Walk, sights were now set on the Audubon 122nd Annual Christmas Bird Count. I participated in the Pamlico count on December 14th, and the New Bern count on December 16th. For the whole week, birders were gifted with excellent weather and even better sightings. Les, Jenni and I had 58 species on our Pamlico count. Many raptors were out that morning, and one of our stops gave us both Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawk, a Cooper's Hawk, two Merlins, and one Kestrel (but no partridge in a pear tree). Other memorable sightings that morning were a flock of 45 Wild Turkey, a flock of 54 Tundra Swans, and a lone female Rusty Blackbird that answered to Les' call (thank you, Les!)



*Cooper's Hawk
Pamlico County
Christmas Count*

*Dec. 14th, 2021
©Michael Cheves*

Conclusion on Page #5

Bird Report – December 2021

by Michael Cheves, continued from Page #4

After a welcome rest day on Wednesday, it was back to work early on Thursday for the New Bern Christmas Bird Count. Tom Leith and I traveled to Jones County for a morning of birding at the Catfish Lake waterfowl impoundment. This turned out to be yet another disappointment with respect to duck species, as we did not see any ducks or geese. A Great Egret and a Great Blue Heron were the only real water birds we encountered there. What we lacked in ducks, we made up for it sparrows – Eastern Towhees, Song Sparrows, Swamp Sparrows, hordes of them in the shrub lines next to the service roads. We heard a Fox Sparrow in song, a song which I recognized but could not remember. Thankfully, Tom’s Merlin app was recording on his phone, and we were able to verify that it was a Fox Sparrow. The song of the Fox Sparrow was an early Christmas gift to my ears. The grand slam Bird Of The Day was a red-morph Eastern Screech-Owl, fast asleep in a duck box on the Northwest side of the impoundments. How satisfying is it to get a good, long look at a bird that, normally, you would only expect to hear? We left the Croatan National Forest with 36 species to contribute to the count. The final tally for New Bern was 119 species, one of the highest counts for the area in recent years. A wonderful job done by all! Thank you to everyone that helped with the Christmas counts.

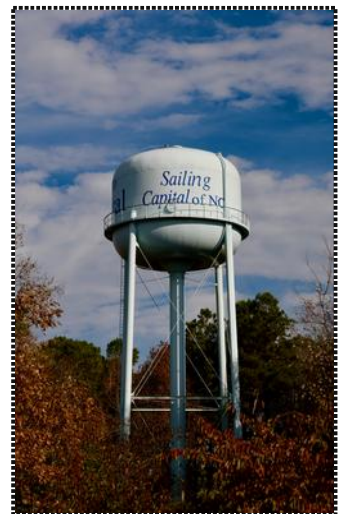


*Eastern Screech-Owl
Catfish Lake Waterfowl
Impoundments, Jones
County*

*December 16th, 2021
©Michael Cheves*

*Right & Below:
LNBC Birders at Bent
Tree Rd.
Oriental, NC*

*Dec. 4th, 2021
©Mike Creedon*



*Water tower at the
Oriental water treatment
plant*

*Dec. 4th, 2021
©Mike Creedon*

Lower Neuse Bird Club

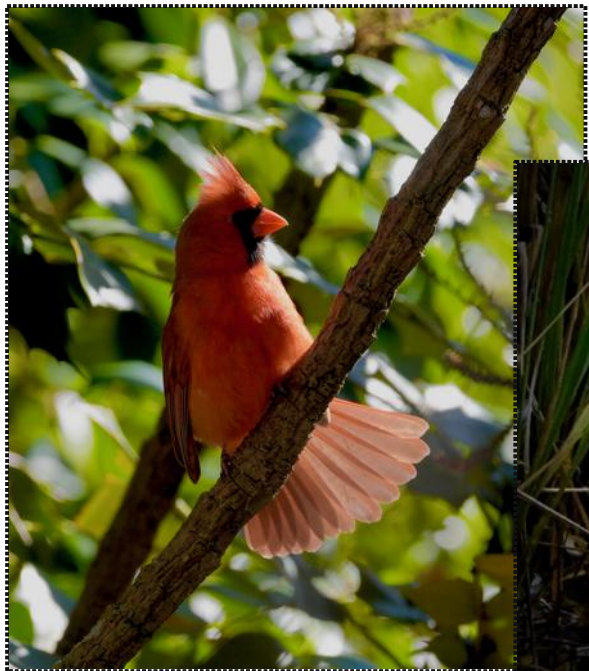
Checklist: Oriental/Surrounding, Dec. 4th, 2021

Compiled by Sheryl McNair & Diane Midness

#	Species	#	Species	#	Species
1.	Wood Duck	20.	Red-shouldered Hawk	39.	Carolina Wren
2.	Mallard	21.	Belted Kingfisher	40.	European Starling
3.	Bufflehead	22.	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	41.	Gray Catbird
4.	Hooded Merganser	23.	Red-bellied Woodpecker	42.	Northern Mockingbird
5.	Rock Pigeon	24.	Downy Woodpecker	43.	Eastern Bluebird
6.	Killdeer	25.	Hairy Woodpecker	44.	American Robin
7.	Wilson's Snipe	26.	Pileated Woodpecker	45.	Chipping Sparrow
8.	Greater Yellowlegs	27.	Northern Flicker	46.	White-throated Sparrow
9.	Laughing Gull	28.	American Kestrel	47.	Song Sparrow
10.	Ring-billed Gull	29.	Eastern Phoebe	48.	Swamp Sparrow
11.	Great Black-backed Gull	30.	Blue-headed Vireo	49.	Eastern Towhee
12.	Royal Tern	31.	Blue Jay	50.	Eastern Meadowlark
13.	Double-crested Cormorant	32.	American Crow	51.	Red-winged Blackbird
14.	Brown Pelican	33.	Fish Crow	52.	Brown-headed Cowbird
15.	Great Blue Heron	34.	Carolina Chickadee	53.	Orange-crowned Warbler
16.	Great Egret	35.	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	54.	Pine Warbler
17.	Turkey Vulture	36.	Golden-crowned Kinglet	55.	Yellow-rumped Warbler
18.	Northern Harrier	37.	Brown-headed Nuthatch	56.	Northern Cardinal
19.	Cooper's Hawk	38.	Brown Creeper		

LNBC Photo Gallery

Submissions welcome! Send your bird, wildlife, and nature photograph(s) to lowerneusebirdclub@gmail.com
Full credit will be given to the photographer



Left: Northern Cardinal, New Bern, NC
Below: Raccoon at Chincoteague Island, VA
Both ©Mike Creedon



House Wren
Oriental, NC

Dec. 4th, 2021
©Mike Creedon



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Taberna, New Bern, NC

December 2021
©Michael Cheves

Lower Neuse Bird Club

LNBC Photo Gallery



Above: Royal Tern, Styrontown Beach Rd., Oriental, Dec. 4th
Right: Rusty Blackbird (Female), Bayboro (Christmas Count, Dec. 14th)
©Michael Cheves



Left Top: Northern Shovelers, Bayboro water treatment plant (Christmas Count, Dec. 14th)
Left Bottom: Wild Turkeys, Cowell Loop Rd., Bayboro (Christmas Count)

Below: Ring-billed and Laughing Gulls
Styrontown Beach Rd., Oriental, Dec. 4th
©Michael Cheves



HAPPY
New Year